



General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 May 2011

English only

Human Rights Council

Seventeenth session

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 May 2011]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Racism and Islamophobia

A vast part of world's communities have deep and rooted problems with the way they approach foreigners, religious and ethnic minorities, and how they approach the holies of religions. In view of the acceptability of the levels of some of these insults and the hope to improve them, especially through raising societies' awareness and transparency of attitudes and distorted beliefs, nonetheless we witness more powerful and rooted forms of racism and Islamophobia in Europe, in spite of all the human right claims of this continent, something that is very sad.

Reviewing the events that have taken place in Europe over the last few months, the Organization for Defending Victims of violence has noticed a large volume of human rights violation cases, particularly intentional or unintentional incitement of the mass media to these issues and escalation and provision of racist and Islamophobic views.

As stressed by Human Rights Watch, in Italy ethnic and racial hatred crimes are very rarely prosecuted in Italy. In fact it seems as though Italian officials try to make this issue insignificant; an approach that in practice has resulted in the spread of these types of crimes. Furthermore, the tone of the officials of the country, government policies and the media have given negative clichés against migrants, Muslims and the Roma and escalated these injustices.

In Germany, the approach of the government to Muslims issues has resulted in the number of attacks against mosques and Islamic centres in Berlin to rise sharply to an extent where the city has become the main focal point of Islamophobia in the country. Over the last few months several Islamic centres have been attacked by groups who wanted to set these places on fire, and although the police is investigating these very slowly, but we believe that these acts that have been committed in a series have roots in racial and religious convergence in Germany. Explosion of a bomb outside the Iranian Cultural Centre in Berlin and a total of 5 attacks against mosques last summer are examples of these acts.

One of the most significant Islamophobic and also escalation of defamation of religion that took place eight months ago by a preacher in the United States who had announced his intention on burning the holy book of 1.6 billion people and only backed off when the US government pressed him to refrain from doing so. With a reference to the consequences of these unwise behaviours on Muslim societies, such as the death of a number of Afghans during anti-Koran burning protests, while condemning these Islamophobic treatments that are committed under the cover of freedom of belief and expression, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence resolutely calls upon the United States government to adopt measures to not only prevent these types of actions not to take place, but also the "defamation of religion mentality, Ibrahamic religions in particular" not to have the space to grow in the American society, a society which is religious.

We believe the US government's performance against these sorts of treatments have not only not been preventive, but it can even be said that they have been inciting. Biased news coverage on Muslims, efforts to link Islam to terrorism, which unfortunately are repeated not only in the media, but also the official statements of the government, and other instances are all issues which escalate this sick phenomenon, cause Islamophobic views to appear in the American society.

Unfortunately it seems that not only in America, but also in Europe over the recent months such measures and vocabulary by western politicians have become in a way a method to win votes in elections, and by exploiting the sentiments of the people in their constituencies, to promote anger and hatred towards Islam and Muslims.

While condemning these sorts of measures that serve no purpose other than fuelling the fire of religious hatred, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence calls upon the Human Rights Council to by paying importance more than before on issues such as the promotion of interfaith dialogue and transparency and clarification of wrong assumptions of monotheist religions, to the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression, and freedom of religion and belief a joint mandate to find practical and sustainable solutions to overcome this problem. We hop with the acceptance and start of this initiative an fitting atmosphere away from prejudices comes about, so that the followers of monotheist religions can live alongside each other amicably through peaceful coexistence and mutual respect to each others holies.
